March 18, 2019
Notes

- Literary response essay is due the 29th of March. You can turn your paper in on the 1st of April with no penalty, but you won't get the paper back until the 8th. If you turn it in on the original due date (29th), you will receive your grade the following Monday.

*So, a lot of my notes didn't save entirely, so I'm basically re-oing them. Enjoy.*

## *Inferno by Dante Alighieri*

Dante Alighieri
1265 -1321
Circa.1310

## *Mini Bio*

Home city is Florence. Had a love-hate relationship with the city. Florence ruled itself, as Italy was not a unified nation. Very prosperous. On Major trade routes. Economic hub. Less than one hundred thousand people. People referred to as Florentines. The home of many artists and authors. *(Class Notes)*

Dante's father, Alighiero was a banker, making the family a part of the upper middle class. *(Class Notes)*

Specific verses of the Paradiso, third book of the Divine Comedy is suggested provide a possible clue that Dante was born under the sign of Gemini: "As I revolved with the eternal twins, I saw revealed, from hills to river outlets, the threshing-floor that makes us so ferocious" (XXII 151–154). In 1265, the sun was in Gemini between approximately May 11 and June 11 (Julian calendar). {*"Dictionary of the Middle Ages" Dante;Volume 4 by Robert Hollander}*

Giovanni Boccacio (June 16, 1313-December 21, 1375), a fellow poet and author claimed that the Dante himself said that he was born in May. *{See "Alighieri Dante" in the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani.}*

The poet, Boccaccio continues to describe Dante as follows: "the poet was of middle height, and in his later years he walked somewhat bent over, with a grave and gentle gait. He was clad always in most seemly attire, such as befitted his ripe years. His face was long, his nose aquiline, and his eyes big rather than small. His jaws were large, and his lower lip protruded. He had a brown complexion, his hair and beard were thick, black, and curly, and his countenance was always melancholy and thoughtful. {*Holbrook, Richard. "Portraits of Dante from Giotto to Raffael: a critical study, with a concise iconography". 1911. London: P.L. Warner; Boston, New York, Houghton Mifflin company. p. 16.}*

Dante often claimed that he and his family were descended from Romans *(Inferno, XV, 76)*, something that would later show itself to be a claim that he took pride in. This is done within *Inferno* when we first enter into Circle 1 (Canto 4) of Hell. This portion of Hell is home to Rome's famous classical poets, scholars, and philosophers, many people Dante was known to revere and admire.

- Horace
- Ovid
- Lucan
- Homer
  - Considered four of the greatest (other than Virgil, who is leading Dante through Hell), Roman/Greek poets. In the book they are referred to as pagan poets.
- Electra
- Aeneas
- Caesar
- Saladin
- Aristotle
- Plato
- Orpheus
- Cicero
- Avicenna
- Averroës
  - Famous non-Christian thinkers and historical figures

Circle 1 of Hell was also the least uncomfortable or unhappy place within Hell, simply belonging to those who had lived their lives outside of the Christian church (mainly during a time where Christianity was not truly prevalent). While they are miserable and mourning their lives without the Judeo-Christian God, these people are otherwise doing just fine. While being non-Christians, they are considered to be virtuous. They are described as living in a fabulous castle, commentators suggesting that this castle is a "Castle of Fame," its seven walls symbolizing the seven liberal arts. These seven arts are a system of knowledge developed in the classical period.

## *Florence and Politics*

Religious worship and church attendance was very important in the city. The Catholic church was dominant, and the only church. The church and its teachings were extremely important to Dante. The city was also a very politically active place. At the time, religion and politics regularly coincided. The papacy and their alliances were some of the most significant political issues in Florence during this time. (Class Notes)

*"Alighiero di Bellincione, was a White Guelph who suffered no reprisals after the Ghibellines won the Battle of Montaperti in the middle of the 13th century. This suggests that Alighiero or his family may have enjoyed some protective prestige and status, although some suggest that the politically inactive Alighiero was of such low standing that he was not considered worth exiling."*(Wikipedia)

†Florence had taken a leading role in the disputes concerning secular and eccelesiastical power, split first into two factions.

- Guelphs: Political group that supported the pope.

- Ghibellines: Supported the Holy Roman Emperor

Dante and his family were loyal to a political alliance that supported the Papacy (the Guelphs). This also involved a complex opposition to the aforementioned Ghibellines, who were supported by the Holy Roman Emperor. Dante fought within the Florentine military in 1289, at the Battle of Campaldino (June 11, 1289), its victory bringing about the reformation of the constitution of Florence.

After this time, he became regularly present in Florentine politics. He did so by entering the Physicians and Apothecaries Guild. This was done because to be a part of public life, one had to enroll in one of the city's many commercial or artisan guilds. Being a part of the Physicians and Apothecaries Guild and becoming a professional in the field was not a random decision, as books were regularly sold in apothecaries at the time. This gave Dante a professional advantage in spreading his poetry to readers. He quickly became not only popular, but famous. This became an advantage later on, in reference to his eventual exile from Florence.

Dante rose to power, becoming a member of the city council and a political envoy from the city to the seat of the papal government in Rome. Dante's view was that secular rule and eccesiastical rule should be clearly divided. He argued that a strong ruler in the person of an idealized emperor was necessary for the church to appropriately exercise its moral and religious authority. He voiced this in his *Monarchia* (1318), a political treatise. Because it sought to place limitations on the exercise of political power by the church, *The Monarchia* was immediately condemned: it remained on the list (or "Index") of books that Catholics were forbidden to read until 1881.

During his time in Florentine politics, the Guelphs had become dominant within the city, but an internal fracture began to develop between the Black Guelphs (who continued to support Boniface 8th) and the White Guelphs (who opposed his despotism).

This led to Dante's political career ending in his 29th year of life. Pope Celestine 5th was pressured to abdicate his position as pope, forfeiting it to Pope Boniface 8th. Dante was allied with the previous Pope, causing political strain within the city council. While on a diplomatic mission to Rome, the Black Guelphs staged a coup and took control of the city. Dante was then indicted his with false claims of corruption and financial wrongdoing. Despite being a bullshit claim, the indictment held. This led to Dante's exile from Florence and a death sentence-- burning at the stake. This later was shown to be less of an actual death sentence and more of a show of power, because the council realized that killing one of the most popular and famous authors in Italy would have serious and irreparable political and social consequences. He was later approached by the council and told that his exile would end as long as he plead guilty to the charges and issued a public apology. Dante refused, never to return to Florence.

Even worse, the split into the White and Black parties divided his family. The Black Guelphs were led by the Donatis-- relatives of his wife, Gemma Donati. His wife and four children remained in Florence while Dante remained in exile. This led to Dante travelling from city to city, while continuing his poetic and political writings. The city of Florence never revoked his exile until 2008. The vote was not unanimous-- the motion passed 19 to 5-- suggests that the city's political divisions may have lingered for seven hundred years.

Inferno is one of three books within the Divine Comedy, written by Dante during his exile. In this context, the word "comedy" is not used to describe an amusing work, but a story that possesses a happy ending. *(Class Notes)*

***Sources***
***Out of Order Because This Isn't a Grade***


- “Dante Alighieri.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 17 Mar. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dante_Alighieri.
- The Textbook
- Class Notes
- “Giovanni Boccaccio.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Feb. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Boccaccio.
- *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani*. Istituto Della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1973.
- “Dictionary of the Middle Ages” Dante;Volume 4 by Robert Hollander
- Holbrook, Richard. "Portraits of Dante from Giotto to Raffael: a critical study, with a concise iconography". 1911. London: P.L. Warner; Boston, New York, Houghton Mifflin company. p. 16